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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

MASS COMMUNICATIONS IN EXTENSION WORK
TO MEET THE NEEDS OF 1956 TO 1966*

I. The land-grant college editor must do 5 things:

1. Keep himself and his staff informed on changing communications methods and impact thereof.
2. Implant in all extension personnel an understanding that good public relations is a leading factor in disseminating information, and inspiring its use.
3. Concentrate on developing communications skills in county extension workers.
4. Spend whatever time necessary to get on face-to-face, first-name-calling terms with key people in the mass communications media.
5. Create an understanding by all extension workers that "mass communication" is simply individual communication multiplied. (See attached case history.)

II. The editor can do these things. Here's how:

1. Study the results of surveys made by Washington, and other States. Make some studies on his own. See that the specialists on his own staff keep abreast of developments in their respective fields (news, radio, TV, publications, visuals).
2. Because of his position and experience, the editor is the advisor and demonstrator on public relations. It often is as important to give inspiration as information. That is to say: it is as important to inspire action as it is to give the "how" of the action. Get the idea across to other extension workers that public relations is a tool in getting information accepted and applied.
3. Show county extension workers that their most fruitful "publicity" (information) is that in their own counties. When county workers understand that good communications "in their own back yard" is the base of county, State, and National extension work, they will want to polish their own skills in communications methods.

Then is the time for the editor to strike the hot iron! Conduct workshops, short courses, or whatever in-service device is deemed best to cultivate communication skills in county

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workers. Stay with county workers (in person or by correspondence) until they have confidence in their communication abilities as they have in their subject-matter.

4. The extension editor should periodically contact key people in mass communication media, just as the county agent must make personal contacts with farmers, and the home agent must meet face to face with her homemakers and home demonstration club members.

In Tennessee the editor and the associate editor are on "Dear Bill" terms with somebody in each of the 155 newspapers in the State. This relationship pays dividends too numerous to mention here.

The editor must lead county workers to a realization that communications media people in their county are "V I P's." (Very Important Persons).

5. It must be understood that "mass communication" is simply individual communication multiplied by the number of listeners or watchers.

It takes, say, three minutes to answer a particular question face-to-face, or via the telephone. It takes even less time to answer that same question via radio, TV, or through a column or news story. Thus no extra time is taken from "personal" contacts.

"Mass communications" will not do the whole Extension job; it is simply one of the most important supplemental tools.

The attached case history shows how mass communications is made into individual communication.

A CASE HISTORY

The Agricultural Extension Service office in Warren County, Tenn., has a daily radio program on Radio Station WBCM, at McMinnville. The five agents and assistants have one program each per week.

Mr. Hobart Massey, the county agent, acts upon the technique employed by commercial firms. That is, he assumes that greatest current interest is in the subject upon which he receives the most inquiries. Thus, if he has 20 inquiries on trench silos; 14 inquiries on control of wildfire;

10 inquiries on corn varieties, etc., he bases his program chiefly upon trench silos. He will give brief mention to the other inquiries, and add information on other matters, dates of meetings, etc.

Mr. Massey thus takes advantage of most of the known appeal factors: widest interest, local names, timeliness, etc., and he invites contact with the Extension office.

While his program format seems directed at one person, it actually is directed to all farm families. This is mass communication on an individual basis. It takes only 20 to 30 minutes to prepare and present such a program, since Mr. Massey ^{has} cultivated his skills in this field.

COUNTY AGENT TURNS MASS COMMUNICATION
INTO INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION

Cast - Hobart V. Massey, County Agent

Locale - Warren County, Tenn.

Scene - Studio of Radio Station WBMC, in McMinnville

(Radio program opens with ringing of telephone)

Massey - County Agent's office, Massey speaking. Who? Oh, yes, Mr. Carson. . . . Trench silo? . . . Yes, I think that might be the answer to your problem. We've had a good spring, and you've got a lot of early growth there that might well go into a silo. And, of course, the trench silo is worth thinking about because you can build it within a short while. . . . It can be built now, before you start cutting the crop. . . . Sure thing, I'll be there this afternoon. And, by the way, Mr. Carson, I've got some leaflets prepared by our extension engineers which will help you in building and filling the silo. . . . Surely, I'll bring some. . . . there might be some of your



neighbors who want one. . . . Okay, I'll be there this afternoon.

Goodbye, now.

(Sound of replacing receiver)

Massey - Farm friends, that was Mr. Sam Carson, who lives on Sparta Road, about three miles from McMinnville. He is interested in building a trench silo to take care of a lot of lush growth on some small grain fields.

Now, Mr. Carson's problem may be your problem, too. You see, small grains, buttonclover, vetch, surplus growth on your permanent pastures; and the first cutting of alfalfa, will make good feed for livestock in the late summer months, when pastures are short.

(The county agent then talks for a minute or two on the advantages of trench silos, their low cost, their ease of construction, how they store early spring growth for later feed, etc.)

Many of you are confronted with the same problem. For example, Mr. Tom Stokes, on Highway 70, has an excellent 15-acre field of alfalfa about ready for its first cutting. Then, too, I have seen the small grain and the vetch on farms of Mr. Dick Adams, Mr. Raymond Sutton, and Mr. Calvin Street.

If you do not now have provision for saving this excellent early growth, why not figure on a trench silo? Drop us a postcard for Leaflet 128, Trench Silos. And, whatever your farming and homemaking problems are, the county office of the Agricultural Extension Service is ready to help you. Just give us a ring on the telephone, write a letter or card; or come by to see us.

Now here are some other questions we have had within the past day or two.

(The agent then takes up other inquiries.)

Also, here are some matters affecting farm families of Warren County.

(Here the agent uses Washington news, recent laws, policy changes, ASC matters, etc. He then comes to a close:)

Let us hear from you. . . . we're here to serve you. This is County Agent Massey speaking. . . . I return you now to your announcer.





